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RESULTS OF ASSEMBLY POLLS FOR FOUR STATES, 1 UT TODAY

Exercise to begin on Sunday morning across 2,364 counting halls in Assam, West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu & Puducherry

ELABORATE ARRANGEMENTS AT CENTRES

Stung by criticism over not enforcing Covid-appropriate behaviour during campaigning, the Election Commission has made elaborate arrangements for counting. Apart from ensuring physical distancing, it has barred gatherings outside halls. Counting will begin at 8 am and continue late into the night, with 1,100 observers closely watching over the process | P8

COVID -VE CERTIFICATE MUST FOR AGENTS

- Candidates and agents will have to produce a negative Covid-19 test report or double dose of vaccination certificate to get entry
- The results will have a bearing on Congress' future as a national party, while serving as a litmus test for the BJP's expansion plans
- It will also likely reflect the public perception on Covid handling

200%

INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF COUNTING CENTRES IN VIEW OF THE PANDEMIC

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Oxygen-starved hospital horror

Head of dept at Batra Hospital among the dead; Fortis Hospital stops new admissions; Max doctor on Covid duty takes his own life

Batra Hospital employees paying respects to Dr R K Himthani | TWITTER

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

DISRUPTION in oxygen supply resulted in the death of 12 Covid-19 patients at Batra Hospital on Saturday. One of the deceased was RK Himthani, head of the gastroenterology department of the hospital.

Medical director of the hospital Dr SCL Gupta said that six of the deceased, including the doctor, were in ICU on high flow of oxygen. The doctor was admitted to the hospital 15-20 days ago.

"There were patients who could have survived, but they could not because of oxygen shortage. The government should take some decision, either close the hospital or admissions. What was the fault of those who died due to shortage of oxygen?" he asked.

The hospital had raised an alarm over depleting stocks around noon, after which AAP MLA Raghav Chadha, who monitors supply to several hospitals in the city, said the gas was reaching the hospital. "Our SOS cryogenic tanker carrying Liquid Medical Oxygen is reaching Batra Hospital within 5 minutes. Their regular supplier of oxygen has defaulted yet again due to alleged 'lack of oxygen supplies' and is being pulled up," he tweeted.

Gupta said they had informed authorities about the lack of oxygen in the morning when they had 2,500 litres left. Around 12.30 pm, hospital authorities claimed they had run out of oxygen. The tanker arrived at 1.35 pm, they added.

Expressing grief, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal once again flagged the issue of short supply to Delhi. "Their lives could have been saved by giving them oxygen on time. Delhi should get its quota of oxygen. Can't see our people dying like this. Delhi needs 976 tonnes of oxygen, but it received only 312 tonnes yesterday. How will Delhi breathe in such a less amount of oxygen?" his tweet in Hindi said.

NATIONWIDE	APRIL 30	MAY 1
Fresh cases	3,86,452	4,01,993
Recoveries	2,97,540	2,99,988
Deaths	3,498	3,523

Other hospitals in the city also sent out messages about oxygen shortage on Saturday. Fortis Hospital in Vasant Kunj stopped taking admissions due to shortage. Sehgal Neo hospital in Paschim Vihar, Sant Parmanand Hospital in Civil Lines, Bhagat Chandra Hospital (Palam) and MD City Hospital of Model Town also sought help.

Meanwhile, a 35-year-old resident doctor at Delhi's Max Hospital died by suicide on Saturday. Dr Vivek Rai was on Covid duty and was reportedly under stress. "He was frustrated watching people die despite his best efforts," tweeted former IMA chief Dr Ravi Wankhedkar. Police said the suicide note cited no reason.

18 DIE IN GUJARAT HOSPITAL BLAZE

Bharuch: At least 18 people, including 16 Covid patients, died in a fire at a hospital at Bharuch in Gujarat on Saturday. The victims were either charred to death or died due to suffocation after a suspected short-circuit sparked the blaze at Patel Welfare Hospital

Water has gone above head, give oxygen now: Delhi HC to Centre

KANU SARDA @ New Delhi

TAKING a stern tone over Delhi not getting its due share of medical oxygen, the Delhi High Court on Saturday told the Centre to arrange its full quota by whatever means or face action.

"Water has gone above the head. You have to arrange everything now. You have made the allocations. You have to fulfill it. Eight lives have been lost," a bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli said, while referring to Batra Hospital's reported loss of lives, including that of a doctor, after oxygen supply stopped for 80 minutes on Saturday. The number has since risen to 12.

"We direct the Centre to ensure that Delhi receives its 490 MT today by whatever means. It falls on the Centre to arrange tankers as well. If this is not implemented, we may even consider initiating contempt proceedings," the HC said. During the hearing, senior advocate Rahul Mehra, appearing for the Delhi government, stated that while Delhi's demand was 700 MT, but 490 MT has been allocated, of which the suppliers had made a voluntary commitment to supply 445MT.

"Our tankers are not given priority. There is no timing, schedule given to us. We are dealing in SoS even today. My officers will have a mental breakdown," Mehta told the bench. "Enough is enough. No one is asking for more than allocated. If you can't supply the allocation today, we will see your explanation on Monday," the HC said, while refusing the Centre time to explain the crisis. The court also sought data with respect to daily Covid-19 admissions and discharges from all hospitals in Delhi starting April 1. The order was passed after the court observed that while the recovery rate was high, there appeared to be choking of beds. "Every day a substantial number of beds should become available. But that does not appear to be happening. Patients who require hospitalisation with oxygen support should normally be in a position to leave within 8-10 days subject to their condition," the court said.

4L Active cases in Karnataka now; Jump in deaths too

FROM ACROSS THE STATE

Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa says 4,000 ICU beds will be set up in Bengaluru

Biocon to start producing Remdesivir at the Belagavi-based Sri Anand Life Science unit

BJP MLC A H Vishwanath demands complete lockdown to contain the spread of Covid-19

A dedicated website providing details about Covid hospitals in Belagavi has been launched

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

THE number of active Covid-19 cases in Karnataka crossed the four-lakh mark on Saturday with the number of patients currently under treatment totaling 4,05,068. The figures went up with a single-day addition of 40,990 fresh cases a day after recording its highest-ever day's jump with 48,296 added on Friday.

The state also recorded its highest number of deaths in a single day at 271, up from 217 on Friday. With this, the Covid-19 death toll has now gone up to 15,794 from 15,523 the previous day.

On the other hand, the state also recorded its highest discharges in a single day at 18,341, a notable jump from 14,884 the previous day. However, the state's positivity rate — the number of people testing positive per 100 tests — has crossed the 6 per cent mark, and now stands at 6.06 per cent, up from 5.95 per cent on Friday. The total number of patients the state has recorded so far since the pandemic broke out here on March 8, 2020, is 15,64,132. This number was 15,23,142 on Friday.

STATEWIDE	APRIL 30	MAY 1
Fresh cases	48,296	40,990
Recoveries	14,884	18,341
Deaths	217	271

The mortality rate too has been consistently declining, and has come down to 1 per cent. Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar had mentioned earlier on during the pandemic that the State Government's aim was to bring the mortality rate in the state to below 1 per cent and keep it at a minimum below that mark. It was 1.01 per cent on Friday.

The recovery rate, corresponding to the surge in cases, has now fallen to 73.09 per cent from 73.85 per cent the previous day.

Bengaluru Urban district, on its part, added a relatively high number of cases at 19,353, a day after it added a record high of 26,756 cases.

2 DIE IN KALABURAGI AFTER HOSPITAL RUNS OUT OF O_2

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Kalaburagi

TWO Covid patients, who were admitted at the KBN Hospital here a few days ago, died allegedly due to non-availability of oxygen in time to save them, hospital Medical Superintendent Dr Moinuddin disclosed on Saturday.

Speaking to TNIE, Dr Moinuddin said that first patient died around 7 pm and second about an hour later. Both due to shortage of oxygen cylinders, the hospital has stopped admitting Covid patients since a couple of days, he rued. On Saturday, oxygen cylinders were available in the hospital and when they got exhausted, the staff disconnected the pipes to replace the cylinders. During the process, both patients died, according to Moinuddin. When the attendants of the patients came to know that their relatives have died, they tried to assault the staff who ran away to protect themselves, eyewitnesses said.

Meanwhile, Kalaburagi DC V V Jyothsna told TNIE that she had received initial information that three people had died due to shortage of Oxygen, but the number of the deaths is yet to be ascertained. The DC claimed that KBN Hospital has not sent any requisition for oxygen cylinders. The hospital is also not admitting Covid patients referred by the District Government Hospital. Even then, the district administration has provided 10 oxygen cylinders to the hospital. There is no shortage of cylinders in Kalaburagi as on date, she stressed. The District Expert Committee on Covid will visit the hospital and inquire into the cause of death and find out whether the patients died due to oxygen shortage or mismanagement. If it is established that there was negligence, action will be taken, she said.

Dull start to Phase-3 vax as jab shortage persists

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

THE vaccination programme for all adults got off to a slow start on Saturday with many states skipping the launch date and others doing a symbolic vaccination drive due to an acute shortage of doses. While some states like Maharashtra, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka kicked off the inoculation drive for the 18-44 years group in a small way at limited centres, Kerala said its launch will be delayed by a few days due to shortage of vaccines.

In Delhi, vaccination for this group was carried out only at one vaccination centre, with CM Arvind Kejriwal saying that the large-scale distribution of doses will start only on Monday.

Chhattisgarh administered doses to only 1,693 people in that age group till 7 pm on Saturday, while Odisha vaccinated just 96 people in Bhubaneswar in a "symbolic dry run". In Jharkhand, the government said it will announce fresh dates for the jabs once they reach the state. Chief Minister Hemant Soren is seeking at least 50 lakh doses.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said, "The vaccination for those above 18 will be delayed by a few days. As efforts are on to procure vaccines from manufacturers, those in the 18 plus category cannot be given the jabs now."

Meanwhile, the first batch of the Russian Covid-19 vaccine Sputnik V arrived in Hyderabad. The first lot contains 1.5 lakh doses, which works on the principle of delivering a weakened part of the coronavirus using an adenovirus vector, similar to how Covishield functions, that triggers an immune response in the body. The vaccine has shown an efficacy of over 90% in clinical trials.

A young woman gets a vaccine shot in Mumbai on Saturday | PTI

JAB-O-METER
April 29 — 20,84,931 doses
April 30 — 26,08,948 doses
TOTAL DOSES: 15,48,54,096

Token start: Only 35 in 18+ group get jabs

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

AMID a shortage of vaccines, a symbolic start was given to the vaccination drive for the 18-44 year age group in Karnataka on Saturday with only some beneficiaries taking the shot. However, with many hospitals and primary health centres not starting the drive, many were asked to come back as late as June.

Even though Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa and Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar had pointed out that the fourth phase of vaccination is not bound to start from May 1, some hospitals which had stocks have kickstarted the drive. On Saturday, Yediyurappa symbolically launched the drive at a government hospital wherein 26-year-old Pooja C was one of the first ones in the 18-44 age bracket to get vaccinated in the state. "I took the Covishield vaccine at the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Hospital in Shivajinagar. I'm privileged to be among the first ones. I want everyone to come forward and get their shot and fight the pandemic," she said.

CONTINUED ON: P5

EXPRESS READ

GST COLLECTIONS HIT RECORD HIGH

NEW DELHI: GST collections crossed the ₹1 lakh crore mark for the seventh month in a row and touched a record high of over ₹1.41 lakh crore in April, indicating economic recovery, the Finance Ministry said on Saturday. The GST collections, which directly reflect the state of economic activity, in April are 14% higher than ₹1.23 lakh crore mopped up in March. P10

INTERVIEW

'Deploy O_2 equipment judiciously'

Dr Giridhar Babu, epidemiologist at the Indian Institute of Public Health, Bengaluru, says the Covid-19 situation is grim now, especially since the capacity of critical beds is near maximum utilisation. It is important to redistribute oxygen concentrators, procure new ones and deploy them in most PHCs and maternity homes. Having more concentrators as the first point of care, will provide support to many people in moderate distress, he suggests | P4

NEVERENDING CRISIS

As dead bodies pile up, firewood for pyre runs out

People in PPE kits perform the last rites of their loved ones who died from Covid-19, amidst multiple pyres at Giddenahalli, in Bengaluru on Saturday | VINOD KUMAR T

BOSKY KHANNA @ Bengaluru

FIRST, it was the lack of space. Now, with more and more bodies of Covid victims piling up at cremation grounds each day, the authorities are now faced with another problem - finding enough firewood for the pyres. The government has created three makeshift crematoria in and around Bengaluru, apart from the existing ones.

To cremate a body, about one-and-half tons of firewood is required. Officials from Karnataka Forest Department and the BBMP have expressed concerns over the shortage of wood as there is only about 150 tons of it left with the BBMP Forest Cell.

The State Government opened three makeshift crematoria, where, in the last 10 days, about 200 tons of wood has been used. "For one pyre, about 1,300- 1,500 kg of wood is needed. On an average, 42 bodies are being cremated daily at one site. At this rate, we are worried that we will be left with no wood and we will have no option but to axe trees," said a BBMP official. The government is also procuring wood from the Forest Department, but at a price. Officials from Karnataka Forest Industries Corporation said, "The government wanted wood immediately and we did not have the suitable type (with high calorific value, like Eucalyptus or Casasurina). Since we are only facilitators, we coordinated with suppliers and contractors," said a senior Forest Department official. P4

BENGALURU'S CREMATORIUMS, BURIAL GROUNDS FEEL THE HEAT

With Bengaluru Urban district witnessing an increase in Covid fatalities over the past few weeks, the situation at the city's crematoriums and burial grounds is also grim. A long queue of ambulances carrying bodies can be seen waiting for hours. Volunteers say that the scene has worsened in the past two weeks | P4